

GAYLAXY

Empowering eXpressions

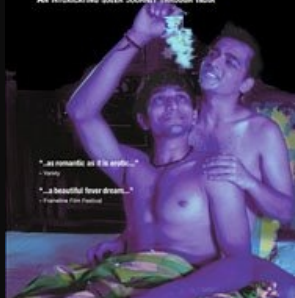


THE **Pink Mirror**

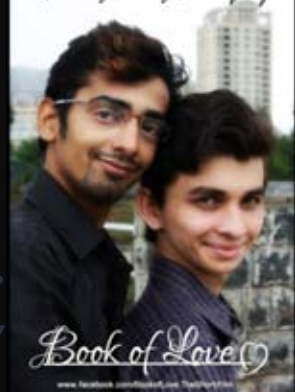


Yours Emotionally

AN INTERESTING JOURNEY THROUGH INDIA



Running Loving Successfully



Book of Love



CINEMA OUTSIDE THE CLOSET

A photograph of two shirtless men. The man in the foreground is leaning forward, looking towards the camera with a slight smile. He has a short beard and is wearing a thin chain necklace. The man behind him is also looking at the camera, with his arms around the first man's shoulders. Both men are wearing white briefs. The background is plain white.

**MEET
MEN
ONLINE**

MANHUNTnet

**NOW
IN INDIA**

Editor-in-Chief:

Sukhdeep Singh

Assistant Editor:

Rantideb Mukherjee

Team of Writers:

Dhrubo Jyoti

Hadi Hussain

Kumam Davidson

Raahul Chiranjit Sen

Contributors:

Bharathi

Nisha Ambika

Jijo Kuriakose

Dr. Uttam Dave

Davneet Narang

Aijaz Ahmad

Chanakya

KlosetQ

Ankit Bhuptani

Siddhi Pandya

Tanika Godbole

Barnmala Roy

Manpreet Singh

Design:

Peeyush Jain

Pawan Koserwal

Web:

Apurv Gupta

Marketing & Advertising:

Divir Tiwari

Published from:

Kolkata, India

Email:

editor@gaylaxymag.com

Website:

www.gaylaxymag.com

Editor's Note

Hi All,

This issue comes out at a very crucial stage- both for gay rights in India and for Gaylaxy. The verdict on Sec 377 is expected anytime in the coming few days. Everyone from the community is keeping their fingers crossed. Whether the verdict is in our favour or against us will decide the direction that the gay rights movement in this country will take in the coming years. As of now, we can only hope for the best.

For Gaylaxy too, this is a crucial time since we are undergoing a lot of changes. Over the past 3 years, we have expanded rapidly and have grown from just a magazine to a news source as well. With this issue, we have also launched a new mobile-friendly website which is more in tune with the new direction that we shall be taking. This issue is also going to be the last pdf issue that we take out. While we shall continue to bring out our issue every two months, there will no longer be any pdf designed issue to emulate the print magazines. We realize that we have been an online magazine, and emulating the print format online is not only tedious, but also bogs us down and has been the source of many of our delays.

In an increasingly mobile world, we shall now be focusing on improving your experience of reading Gaylaxy on a host of mobile devices. I hope this switch from a pdf format won't disrupt your experience of reading Gaylaxy much. Of course, all our previous issues shall remain available for download/reading as before.

With this, I will bid goodbye to you all. As always, we have tried putting up a range of very interesting and thought provoking articles. I hope you enjoy them all.

With love
Sukhi



Sukhiman

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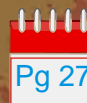
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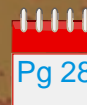
LET'S CELEBRATE THE FESTIVAL OF COLOURS WITH FLOWERS!

Know Your Basic Rights



LIFESTYLE

The Bear Culture

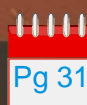


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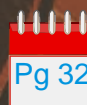
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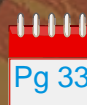
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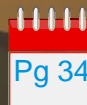
A Man's World



Just Let Us Be!

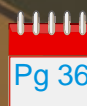


Here's To The Ladies In Drag!

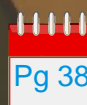


LEISURE

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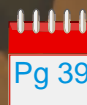


EP Fall Apart



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Book Review: Niv

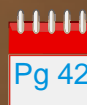


Poems



NGO

NGO List





CINEMA OUTSIDE THE CLOSET

Young filmmakers are bringing queer issues to the fore through their movies, but there are challenges galore; writes **Dhrubo Jyoti**

When Amitava Sarkar wrote a story in 2004-05 from her experiences, she found that there were no films that talked about the problems that transpeople face. She found there was scant opportunity; no resources that could help her produce a film about the so-called marginalized people.

Four years later, looking to make a docu-feature about a transgender individual, she found that nothing much had changed. With a modest budget of Rs 22,000, she made "Rupantar", asking her queer friends to portray characters in the film. "It didn't cost a lot of money since they were happy to help," she says. Rupantar was supported by SAATHII (Solidarity and Action Against The

HIV Infection in India), with financial support from the Elton John AIDS Foundation London. Sarkar's experience is one that echoes throughout the queer film circuit in India, a promising genre that is being throttled by lack of finances and support. "In this country, film makers hardly get funds for short films, let alone funds for a queer-themed film," rues Rohan Kanawade, the interior-designer-turned-director of Ektya Bhinti (Lonely Walls), a much-written about film about the relationship between a queer son and his father.

After years of oppressive laws and a cloak-and-dagger policy by law-enforcement agencies, India took a firm step in acknowledging and empowering its queer

population in 2009 with the Delhi High Court decriminalizing homosexuality.

In 2010, the Kashish Mumbai International Queer Film Festival started, to great buzz in the queer circuit, managing to draw publicity from the mainstream press as well. Kashish has now become South Asia's largest queer-themed film festival. Along with others queer film festivals, some of which pre-date Kashish, queer cinema in India is slowly gaining strength.

Cinema has always been an important cultural pivot for a society, possessing the ability to both hold a mirror to society and influence social change. "Cinema is a reflection of the culture we follow," says Kanawade. It holds out incredible promise, especially, for a community viewed with the jaundiced eye of prejudice and misinformation. "The queer movement is about attitudinal change that legal reform cannot alone ensure. Cinema is that opinion

builder," says Pawan Dhall of SAATHII, associated with the Siddhartha Gautam Film Festival for many years now.

With ever increasing visibility of the queer population in India, there is also a corresponding spurt in young film-makers eager to tell their story on celluloid. Quality, however, sometimes becomes the casualty. Although Indian film submissions at Kashish doubled to 50 in the space of three years, only 18 could be screened. "A majority of the films don't measure up to basic standards of good content or filmmaking. There are too many fly-by-night filmmakers with no technical expertise or even a cinematic eye," rues Sridhar Rangayan, film-maker and director of Kashish.

However, part of the lack of pre- and post-production quality and technical finesse can be attributed to the lack of funds, "which is a big issue", according to queer film-maker Lokesh.

The rot goes even deeper. "It is a vicious cycle- mainstream filmmakers don't make queer films since they can't get producers and finance; the producers blame the distributor and the exhibitor who aren't willing to take a risk; the distributor says there is no audience and the audience bemoan the lack of quality queer films," says Rangayan.

On the side, experimental queer cinema is flourishing, especially shorts and documentaries, says Nakshatra, who claims to make his films with zero budget. Rangayan agrees. "Filmmakers often invest their own money, time and connections for independent documentaries and shorts." The technical lacunae don't stop filmmakers from telling their stories from the heart, which is just as important. A testament to the same is the recent documentary, *Ebong Bewarish (And the Unclaimed)*.



Gulabi Aaina (*The Pink Mirror*) remains banned in India



Nakshatra after winning award at Kashish

The problem also stems from the relatively young cinema movement that is still coming to terms with itself. "I definitely see fewer intelligent portrayals of lesbian and bisexual people," says Dhall. Even within the queer film circuit, stereotypes exist, complains Kanawade, whose film received many negative comments since it exhibited father-son incest, a thorny topic for Indian audience. "Half the queer community of Mumbai opposed me, they said I shouldn't have made the film," he says.

Rangayan's own favourite film, *Yours Emotionally*, remains one of the most unabashed portrayals of desire. "This made many uncomfortable, including people from the queer community. Our community needs to be more accepting of oneself before we ask the mainstream to do the same," he says. Indian queer cinema still has relatively few portrayals of transmen, and urban themes are predominant, feels Vikranth Prasanna, founder of Chennai Dost.

While the popular rhetoric seems to be that the audience isn't ready, they seem to ready for all the crude, double-entendre gay or lesbian jokes dished out film after film, as in the recent *Grand Masti*

Criticism on this front can be unduly harsh, since every film-maker wants to tell a story and cannot be expected to think of diversity first; in fact, it would be foolish to expect the entire spectrum to be represented in a single film, says Dhall.

Encouragingly, regional space increasingly offers succor to queer films. Not just the well-known works of the auteur Rituparno Ghosh, but also Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada, Odiya among others provide a space for alternative modes of storytelling. "Regional cinema seems less burdened by market forces and willing to be more experimental with its themes," says Rangayan.

The successful growth of queer cinema lies, however, in a horizon that is littered with homophobia and gendered violence. Rituparno Ghosh, arguably the most visible of the queer film-makers, had to make a

space for himself as a director before delving into his much-acclaimed trilogy of queer films. Indeed, his lifestyle was termed "flamboyant" and disapproved since it didn't conform to mainstream traditions. The genteel Bengali middle class, often

patrons of culture, didn't flinch while seeking matinee entertainment by televised impersonations of Ghosh's idiosyncrasies. It is only in his death that, hypocritically, he was hailed as a pioneer of queer cinema, by many of those who sniggered at his 'faggot' mannerisms.

"Mainstream films still likes to see their actors as college students, in love with beautiful girls, no matter if he is in his forties while the heroin is 20-something," fumes Kanawade.



Amitava Sarkar

It is all about the star, the banner name and not the story, thinks Nakshatra. Not only is Rangayan's film, *Gulabi Aaina*, still banned in India but *I Am*, a film by Onir, faced an uphill task before release, despite having several well-known actors. Dipti Naval's directorial debut, *"Do Paise ki Dhoop, Chaar Aane ki Baarish"*, is still stuck in red-tape after five years. While the popular rhetoric seems to be that the audience isn't ready, they seem to be ready for all the crude, double-entendre gay or lesbian jokes dished out film after film, as in the recent *Grand Masti*.

The only way out is to have a "combined

turnaround by film-makers, producers, distributors and mainstream actors, who can think out of the box and dare to make a sensitive and positive queer film, according to Rangayan. The solution, according to Kanawade, is to keep making more films, even on a shoe-string budget since producers will come forward to try their luck only when the industry grows on its own.

In the mean while, the clouds have a silver lining. India's obsession with mainstream cinema gives the queer community an opportunity, thinks Vikranth Prasanna. "In a country where Amitabh and Rajinikanth are demi-gods, films are very important to make queer issues visible," he thinks. The explosion of the internet has also enabled a new generation of film-makers as they can now conveniently by-pass the expensive distribution route and garners a new and focused audience online. Nakshatra, many of whose shorts are uploaded on the web, testifies to the easy access being a great boon for queer cinema. Crowd funding films is also an idea that is fast gaining currency, says Lokesh. "In the future, our aim is to initiate a film fund for queer cinema in India," says Rangayan.

In a country where Amitabh and Rajinikanth are demi-gods, films are very important to make queer issues visible

Moreover, he also says he gets a great response from many heterosexual people who were ill informed about homosexuality. The ever increasing straight allies and heterosexual crowd at *Kashish* and other film festivals also stand testimony to the slowly changing scenario in India.

The ultimate question, one that is raised by Pawan Dhall, is whether any art form can be bracketed in definitions like queer. That is a debate which shall play out in the days to come. For now, Nakshatra's aim of an Indian "Brokeback Mountain" seems like a distant dream.

Russian Anti Gay Law



What It Says And What It Means

-Nisha Ambika

A few months ago, there was a huge furore over the Russian anti gay legislation. There were protests and the Russian government tried to curb the protests, they ended up hurting a lot of people. Heck there were citizens against citizens and the police wasn't doing much to control the situation. Eventually the entire matter simply slipped away from the media highlights. Here we are attempting to bring attention back to the issue, because we feel that any country that has an anti gay legislation certainly has a problem in its understanding of human life and rights.

India has only recently read down section 377 and with the kind of ties that we have with Russia, this could only set back the movement for LGBTQIA rights by a couple of centuries. So what does the legislation mean? Same sex activity is criminal. Does this bill say that? - Simply put, No. It doesn't. Russia decriminalized same sex activity way back in 1993. But there is no law which criminalizes discrimination against LGBTQIA. Homosexuality was also considered 'not a

mental illness' in 1999. This legislation, particularly Article 6.21: -

1. Talks about **Propaganda of 'non-traditional' sexual relations among minors.**
2. **Prohibits the distribution of information to minors related to homosexual or any other kind of relations.** The euphemism used in the article is 'non – traditional sexual relations'. Any information which can essentially tell adolescents or even children that it is okay to have homosexual relations and be attracted to the same sex is thus banned. The offence can be booked as criminal and/or the fine that will be levied is around four to five thousand rubles.
3. **Prohibits such distribution digitally, through the media or the internet.** This offence too can be booked as criminal or the fine is around fifty to one hundred thousand rubles or the closure of any organization doing so for at least 3 months.

4. If a foreign organization tries to do that then they can be booked under criminal offence or fined up to four thousand to five thousand rubles with deportation or arrest. If it is done by them through the internet then it can be considered a criminal offence or the fine is around fifty thousand to one hundred thousand rubles with deportation or arrest.

If you can't understand the ramifications, here is your enlightenment:

Like in India, or any other country, there is a lot of discrimination against the LGBTQIA in Russia too. No surprises there. What is problematic though is that there are a lot of things unsaid in the legislation. Which are those? Let me ask you these: -

? Does it specify where? So where is the venue of this distribution of information? Where do you think – schools, colleges? Can it be the street? It can be. But then the law prohibits these places. The internet, the television, the radio too.

? Does it specify the target audience for such a distribution of information? Yes it does. It says minors. But the age of consent for hetero / homo sexual relationship is 16, so the target audience will be younger than that. But children's perceptions are formed before that. And the venue could be something as wide as the street or the internet, the media. If you read between the lines, the legislation effectively bans the distribution of information, spreading of awareness regarding different kinds of sexualities completely (irrespective of age group) especially through these channels which cannot be regulated, by saying that it is banned for minors. Certainly it also translates to no pride walks or events, because you cannot say that minors are not allowed between 5:30 EST to 7:30 EST because there is a pride walk. Russian government's printer goes out of ink to print that kind of permission



or any permission to any pride walk.

? Does it specify what you cannot do? No. The legislation uses the words 'distribution of information', which is so broad that the smallest acts such as a pamphlet distribution to holding seminars can be booked under it. Now imagine an instance, a parent talking to their children about different kinds of sexualities and ensuring that they don't turn up to be douchebags can be sent to jail or face a hefty fine if an overzealous neighbor thinks that they are propagating different kinds of sexualities and their own children will be exposed to such an abomination (really???). Good, vigilant neighbors have always been a blessing. Earlier it was for us, now it is for the state.

? Who can distribute this information? No one. Not the government officials, not citizens, no non government organizations, no media houses, no outside agencies.

? Why is the Russian government doing this? Are they nuts? – Well you know, I am tempted to answer the question with – Yes, they are also homophobic snobs who happen to hijack the entire nation and no one sees sense, but I will refrain. The Russian government like many other governments in other countries is bound by what the majority believes. Here are some shocking findings: -

- A 2013 survey found that around 74% Russians believe that homosexuality should not be accepted by the society.

- ✚ The leader of the Russian Orthodox Church says that the idea of same sex marriage was a very dangerous sign of the Apocalypse (those who watch Supernatural can bombard him with links to the relevant episode). 80% Russians are members of this church.
- ✚ At least ten regions in Russia have similar laws which ban the propaganda of homosexuality among minors, some even have laws against the propaganda of bisexuality and transgender-ism. These may or may not be restricted to distribution of information but can include a variety of prohibitions. Also some of them may not be just among minors but also propaganda in general.
- ✚ In June 2012, the Moscow City Court upheld a new law banning gay pride parades in the city for the next hundred years. Tells a lot about their belief that a hundred years from now, people like them will survive the supposed Apocalypse.
- ✚ Almost 90 percent Russians support this law. I write that and then I think, phew, what can I say?

Ummm, so what can people in Russia do exactly? If you ask me that, there are two choices:

a) Douchebags and really bad people: - They can continue discriminating against the LGBTQIA. The numerous pictures from the protests tell you that. They can also discriminate against the young, who are yet to understand their own sexuality, if they turn out to have 'non-traditional sexuality'. The government gives them their whole hearted blessing. Can you imagine that there were no votes against this law? It was passed unanimously.

b) LGBTQIA and the good people: - They can continue to be awesome. They can continue with their sexualities – hetero, homo, a-, bi, or any other consensual relationship. Congratulations, they can hold seminars,

meetings and workshops for those who are not minors. But, I doubt that the Russian government will again find something wrong with that and make some other medieval law making them illegal too. They, particularly the LGBTQIA, can adopt children but they should be single and not married. Only heterosexual couples can adopt children (that's another stupid law, but more on that later). Transgenders, transsexuals can change their sex. I totally empathize with the handful of sane people, because looking at the statistics, they are really rare and far between.

What can we do? Criticize the Russian government, may be. International pressure can be a wonderful thing. Give it more and more attention, so that they don't get away with it. Let the LGBTQIA in Russia know that we are with them.

I understand that many would believe that this may not be such a big issue than it is made out to be. But if you look at the numerous interpretations that this law can have, you would agree that being a person with 'non-traditional sexuality' will not be exactly comfortable in Russia. Hence one would be more vulnerable to attacks and there might be faint to no hope of justice by the law.



BODY FLUIDS AND HIV



Dr. Uttam Dave tells you all that you should know about body fluids and disease

HIV is transmitted through body fluids. These fluids are blood, semen and to a lesser extent saliva. HIV is transmitted by blood mostly through anal sex. It is less certain to what extent semen or precum ingested during oral sex can transmit enough of the virus to cause an infection.

There are very few cases of men getting infected with HIV because they have performed oral sex on other men. For this reason, many men don't wear rubber while receiving oral sex. While sucking is safer than having anal sex, it is not 100 per cent safe, and there are risks of catching other STDs. Don't perform oral sex under the following conditions:

1. If you have been to a dentist within 48 hours
2. You have an open sore of any kind on the inside of your mouth or a severe gum disease
3. Your partner has any kind of sore or lesion on his penis.

In all these cases, it is better to wait until healing is complete before engaging in oral

sex.

All the above rules need extra caution especially if you or your partner is HIV+. If you forget any of these rules, immediately gargle with a mouthwash with 8 percent or more of alcohol or a suitable solution of hydrogen peroxide and water.

If you are into irrumation (a man having sex with another man's mouth) you might want to restrict it to oral sex only to avoid friction.

French kissing will not infect you with HIV, but it may give you other STDs. Faeces can also transmit Hepatitis when two men indulge in anal sex.

If you have a friend or a lover who is HIV positive, be careful when you clean his body fluids. It is important to always wear gloves. Also, it is very important that an open sore does not get in contact with you as it may transmit the virus.

Dr Dave is a Sexologist. You can visit him on www.intimaterelationshipsdoctor.com.

Among Allies

A young engineering graduate has been shooting videos, **Tanika Godblole** finds out more



Tushar M, an engineering student had a great opportunity waiting for him in Germany. But instead, he chose to stay in India and work for the rights of LGBT youth, because that is what he believed in. His campaign, *I, Ally* encourages and educates friends and families of LGBT individuals. "One of the major factors that inspired me to start the *I, Ally* campaign was the fact that my biggest source of support while I was coming out in college was my friend circle, which mostly comprised straight people. Being in an engineering college, most of the people around were boys. Far from being bullied for coming out, I got an enormous amount of support. It was an eye opening journey for me. It really helped me come to terms with my own sexuality in a comfortable, receptive environment." He firmly believes that every youngster who wishes to come out deserves this kind of acceptance. "The majority of population is heterosexual and hetero-normative, and it is important that all those individuals who are in the closet and afraid to come out see this support."

Apart from messages of love and acceptance, the campaign has also had people with stereotypical ideas of homosexual people that persist in the society. Even though some believe in equal rights for the LGBT, they are bound to impose their preconceived notions instead of letting the individual be. "I, for instance, have

received many videos from girls saying how much they appreciate their gay friends because they are fun and have a great fashion sense. There are two parts to that. One is acceptance of LGBTQ individuals. The other is accepting that they are different. Humans are always averse to change, especially when it is visibly different. I've known people who say they are okay with LGBTQ people who 'blend in'! What a ridiculous notion!" he says.

Tushar had always been active in campus outreach programs, and his campaign *I, Ally* carries messages from straight allies who are accepting, if not completely open minded. "My effort is to educate, raise awareness, and get such messages. Even the tiniest bit of support is of great value. But that's not all I do. I engage, I talk, I clear out stereotypes. The video might be 5 seconds long, but the talk that goes behind it is much more. One-to-one interaction is very useful in raising awareness. The key is to rationally question the fear of homophobes. Talking freely and discussing these feelings is how we could some day, reach a state where there is complete social acceptance." He has gone across Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai and Kolkata and is soon going to take the campaign to Delhi. Even though it is a small initiative, more people are joining in by making contributions with videos and messages. "One of the things I've made sure with *I, Ally* is to show videos from parents, relatives and the general public who also have



young children. Their attitudes and voices matter, since not only can kids identify with what they are saying, but their parents too, see a reflection of themselves in these people who've given great messages of support. It's not just a youth led campaign; it's also about acceptance from all generations in society, from all corners of India," he says.



Such an initiative has great potential for reaching out to the youth and their families across the nation. "It's a great resource, I can say that! For kids everywhere - we have videos in all languages, from all kinds of people of all ages, backgrounds, cultures, ideologies, all saying that everyone deserves the right to love and be loved! Out of the 300 videos I've managed to collect by now, I am sure there's one that will inspire every questioning youth out there to become a little more confident. It will make their parents think about their preconceived notions and biases."

A March for Consciousness, A March in Solidarity

JiJo Kuriakose shares his experience of walking in the 4th Queer Pride Parade, Kerala

The best experience in one's life is one's exploration of oneself with like-minded beings.

I was extremely glad to march for the 4th Queer Pride Parade (Thrissur) on July 2nd, 2013. It was a unique experience. The March was as grave as it was frivolous. The very prospect of lending my voice to world-wide activism was invigorating in itself. It was a matter of sheer pride as we walked in solidarity, under police protection- an obvious sign of government supervision. The March kick started with only a few participants, and

as it reached Academy Hall the whole group got energized with constant support from the people congregated at the venue.

I got to meet a few lesbian girls and transgender guys. I realized that homophobia can be eradicated if we do the needful. The march was definitely a sentimental and "consciousness-raising" experience. I had never attended a Pride March before. The idea was simply to march as an individual who cares for justice and wants to support the struggle for the same. We were, however, peculiar subjects for those who were keen to find out



what was going on as we all walked on.

I found the march to be highly self-illuminating. I walked in support of and in solidarity with my LGBT friends because physical presence matters more to me than random, online activism on various Queer groups. The onlooker's perception of me as a homosexual man was as tough as it was revelatory. I could

feel the intense hostility and hatred an individual from the sexual minority faces when alone and cut off from the security of a crowd. This unique experience is conducive to understanding facts about the society. It strengthens one to face the untoward reactions of the homophobic lot.

The long term struggle goes on and must go on.



Pictures courtesy: Jijo Kuriakose

From India to Belgium: The Story of Nolan Lewis

-Tanika Godbole



The Mr. Gay World 2013 contest held in Antwerp, Belgium had Mumbai's Nolan Lewis reaching the prestigious top 10. Nolan, who was the first participant from India in the past five years, had to face many obstacles to get to this spot. For starters, he had to fund his trip himself since he couldn't find sponsors. "I had somehow already pre-empted the same. At this point of time in our country, supporting the LGBTI cause openly is still a huge risk. You may stand to lose your consumers due to the homophobia and ignorance that is out there. I may have failed to find sponsorship, but I understand the reasons why," says Nolan.

He was selected directly by the international pageant to compete, but Nolan is now trying to organize a Mr. Gay India pageant. His performance at Mr. Gay World 2013 and the attention he has received ever since has surely helped alter the attitudes of sponsors to this cause. "I could have done a lot better, but what I've achieved is nice as well. I will be headhunting my successor who will attend Mr. Gay World 2014 in Rome next year. In terms of the sponsors, we are getting a positive response," he says.

During his time in Belgium, his most memorable experience was coming in contact with the 'Rainbow Cops', the LGBT police force in Antwerp. "Antwerp has a police force consisting exclusively of gay and lesbian police. How cool is that?"

Nolan, who is a graduate in sociology, had modeled with girl band Viva's music video as an eighteen year old. He then gave up modeling to pursue a stable career, but then returned to the profession as a talent management company signed a contract with him about a year back. Nolan says, "I'm narcissist, I love being in front of the camera – which is why I love modeling." Apart from modeling, he keeps himself busy with an exhaustive list of activities like tarot card reading and crystal healing. In his free time, he loves reading and writing poetry and spending time with his loved ones.

A Cultural Celebration Of Awareness

Barnamala Roy writes about The Gender Awareness Month held at Presidency University, Kolkata

Soul Curry, a cultural fusion of poetry and music, marked in the truest sense the celebration of The Gender Awareness Month at Presidency University-an initiative of a few students of the institution. As multi-coloured drapes decorating the stage added to the spirit of gaiety, Sujoy Prosad Chatterjee, with the throes of passion in his immaculate voice accompanied by the melodious notes of Abhinava Chatterjee's keyboard weaved an aura of enchantment in the Derozio Hall, kick starting the celebrations on September 4th.

"And sometimes I'm in the mood, I wanna hit the highway road..." Sujoy's recitation of the lithe lyrics of Dylan's *Baby, I'm in the mood for you* enveloped in the strains of *Blowing in the Wind* commenced the afternoon. The tune of Angelo's rebellion spirit broke free from the lips of the elocutionist and the "caged bird" sang "of freedom" as people, braving the water-logged Kolkata lanes, turned up to embrace the cause of the gender awareness month- emancipation from gender inequality.

Eve Ensler's voice from The Vagina Monologues (the 2003 breakthrough in the history of sexual repression) garbed in Sujoy's tone pierced its way into the psyches of the audience with the opening line of the extract "That is how I came to love my vagina" and went on to follow the trajectory of a woman's hatred of her vagina-the woman self to her falling in love with it. Sudeep Ranjan Sarkar's "The Serpent", Rijurambha's "Goyan Kishore" and Sujit Sarkar's "Fanny r Chithi" were interspersed with the lyricism of Tagore's "Bhanusingher Padabali" and a tribute to revolutionary and filmmaker, Rituparno



Ghosh. A hushed silence, interrupted only by sharp intakes of breath, prevailed during the performance of Ajitesh Bandopadhyay's translation of Brecht -"Marifarer er Bhrunhoyta". The performance focused on the politics of legitimacy or illegitimacy of motherhood through the heartrending depiction of an underage housemaid's condemnation to death in a prison cell right after giving birth to and killing an illegitimate child. The afternoon reached its climax with the brilliant performance of Sujoy-Abhinava duo- "Rajkumar er Chithi", a poem penned by Sujoy himself. The poem -about homosexual

metropolitan love, the eternal delight of a new-found companionship and gradual falling apart- moved the audience to a standing ovation.

The magical aura of Soul Curry was followed by *Sappho for Equality's* screening of the film, "More than a Friend" in the evening. A short film of less than an hour, it depicted the romance of two lesbian lovers-both progressive career women of the 21st

century- interwoven by real-life interviews revealing the uncensored opinions of people regarding alternative sexualities. Snippets from the Kolkata Rainbow Pride March, 2013 and the personal experience of victims of gender discrimination shown in the film once again laid bare the atrocities inflicted by a

disillusioned society curbing the free expression of one's gender identity. The assistant director and a member of the Sappho group wrapped up the day's program by sharing their experience of shooting the

film which is like a dream come true for them. The third day of the Gender Awareness Month thus ended with the hopeful promise of brighter times when all sexual orientations and relationships-straight, homosexual, bisexual, lesbian etc would gain

acknowledgement and encouragement of the society at par with the ending of "More than a friend" where the lover's mother recognizes the genuineness of her daughter's love and lovingly accepts her female partner.

The poem -about homosexual metropolitan love, the eternal delight of a new-found companionship and gradual falling apart-moved the audience to a standing ovation



'There Is A Need For A Mass Awareness Programme': Harish Iyer

Equal Rights activist Harish Iyer was one of the speakers to be invited to speak at Think Conference organised by Tehelka. **Kumam Davidson** talks to Harish about his activism, his life and more

The Guardian named you one of the most Influential LGBT persons living today in the world. Congratulations! You have done a lot for queer activism in India. What more do you think needs to be done?

About my listing, I would be lying if I would not admit that it feels nice to receive such recognitions. But it would also be a lie if I don't admit that it is just that I am visible and out there everywhere on TV, on radio, and on social media so the visibility aids my influence quotient, but there are many

voices in India that work silently and impact life in a very positive way.

About what needs to be done... The Supreme Court verdict announcement is just around the corner. The verdict may give us a legal status or otherwise challenge us in our resolve to assert ourselves as fellow human beings with equal rights under the Sun. The truth remains that it is not the end of our battles, it is the beginning. As LGBTIQ rights become a court room- a board room- a dinner table- a living room discussion, homophobia would also raise its hood and assert its presence. There is a need for a



mass awareness programme. I like the work that Srushti Madurai, Orinam and Humsafar Trust among others are doing relentlessly for the cause. We need to take them as an inspiration, rely on them for guidance or and have mass awareness programmes.

What are your next big steps?

I am planning a street placard campaign for awareness purposes. I will take up different human, animal, environmental issues every month. I also wish to strengthen my school awareness programmes on sexuality education. I plan plan and I plan, unfortunately a day just has 24 hours. I wish it had more.

How important is it "coming out" for a queer person? How important is the idea of "being accepted"?

Coming out to the world is a person's own prerogative. What's more important is coming out to oneself and accepting oneself for what one is. Again, there is no 100% acceptance by everybody. Even in the accepting lot, there are some for whom we are a "victim", for some we are a "cause", for some we are "my gay friend" and for some we are "the good deed of the day". Prejudice, like love, is universal.

In India we see Khap Panchayats dictating dress codes for women and at the same time there is an ongoing movement for same sex marriage and adoption by same sex couple. As an LGBT activist yourself, how do you make sense of all these?

As a human rights person I can say that some people are beyond reason. The Khaps are one such funny lot. They need to be persecuted for the degree of decry that they bring to humanity with their stupid funny thoughts. I hope that someday,



science and humanity would be preferred over myths, folklore and kangaroo courts.

Queer movement is often deemed elitist and hence non-inclusive in many ways and there is also the question of race, class, caste, religion etc. Do you think there is a need to rethink queer movement in the Indian context?

I would not like to intellectualize the movement but state that it is quite organic and at the grassroots level. Just because some of us are on TV and the newspapers and are seen speaking about some initiative or the other doesn't make the movement elitist.

There are many parallel movements in India. And there is space for everybody. We are often afraid to interact with the young about LGBTIQ issues considering the Indian

ethos. I think that needs to be changed. Teenage suicides and depression levels are rising. We need to reach out to youngsters with a comprehensive gender and sexuality education model. There is a risk that we are told off with a "corrupting young minds" comment, but those people who say this need to be educated. A long road, a difficult battle, but this needs to be fought, education education and education is the only answer.

What are your favorite queer magazines in India? Do you enjoy reading Gaylaxy Magazine?

Now don't get me into this queer politics shit. Yes, I enjoy the fact that Gaylaxy is prompt in publishing articles. I think the web interface could be better though.

How does it feel to be invited at a conference like Think Conference, especially with some of the most influential personalities in India and world today?

How does anyone feel when he shares the stage with Robert De Niro, Amitabh Bachchan, A R Rahman, Farhan Akhtar, Girish Karnad, Naseeruddin Shah, Mansoor Khan and many many other? You tell me!!!

Do you have someone special in your life?

Of course I do. It is a pussy and he is a cat. No boyfriend as yet. But I am open to exploring, if you have someone in mind, please let me know I shall ask mom to pass over my horoscope

In the conference you shared the session with with Suzette Jordan, Manisha Devi and Sandhya; all of them rape survivors. Was there a sense of solidarity in that; both of victimhood and victory nonetheless?

We all were unique stories of a past that we desire no one has. Though we all came from different backgrounds, we all were knit together with threads of empowerment.

We all were scared, we had never faced such a large audience ever. I was eager to meet the gutsy Suzette. When I met her, I went straight for a hug. When she expressed that she was a little nervous, I simply teased her, "tu bhi rape victim, main bhi rape victim, same pinch"... suddenly the fear transformed to laughter. We managed to hide our fears in a veil of a joke that we made of ourselves.

You talked about how you faced the lack of a language years ago when you wanted to fight back. What is the role of law in this juncture, as much as your own personal experience also goes? And what are the other aspects to this?

Now we have the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses act, 2012) law. Too good, but too late. Also, the law can only be one of the tools that will help bring down the cases, or stop cases of abuse. But what really works is education and awareness. And it begins with developing a language of words. The change has to be multilateral and multi fold. The society, educational institutes, parents; all play an integral part in developing this language. I don't understand when an eye is an eye and a nose is a nose, why can't a penis be a penis

When an eye is an eye and a nose is a nose, why can't a penis be a penis and a vagina a vagina? What's so shameful or pious about your own body parts that you give it nicknames?



Harish at the Think Conference

and a vagina a vagina? What's so shameful or pious about your own body parts that you give it nicknames?

Garry Kasparov, who voices against Putin's oppression of the queer community in Russia, was also there. Any important exchange of thoughts with him (on lgbt issues) or otherwise with any other dignitaries?

O yes, I had a private chat with Garry about the Anti Gay Propaganda Bill in Russia. He is a great supporter of equal rights for everybody. I shared a quiet private moment at the dinner table with him and his wife Dasha. I told him that we don't really live in an isolated world. I expressed my concern over the condition of LGBT in Russia and shared a little about the Indian scenario. We exchanged cards and expressed the desire to fight together for the right of an equal

share of the sun, the right to live the way we are - with love and dignity.

I met Robert De Niro (BOB). Bob posed with me for a photograph and we exchanged a hug. I also met Shekhar Kapur, I couldn't resist myself from telling him that irrespective of which film gets him international recognition, I would always remember him for Mr. India, for it gave my Sridevi in the best avatar.

I also met Vijay Mallya, Amitabh Bachchan. I ensured that I came out to them. I have a viral disease of coming out, you see.

What next? Any big step in the near future?

I think, our future course would be decided by the way the honorable Supreme Court reacts to the case of Section 377. We all are looking forward to a positive verdict.

Gujarat LGBT Pride Festival

Surat became the first city from the state of Gujarat to organize a Pride march on 6th October. This pride march was organized by GLGBTPF (Gujarat LGBT Pride Festival) and supported by Foram Foundation, Baroda. Around 150 people walked the distance of 3 kms from New Civil Court to Kargil Chowk. People in attendance were not only from the Surat but also from Ahmedabad, Baroda and Mumbai, to name a few. *(Picture Credits : Ankit Bhupatni & Siddhi Pandya)*







KNOW YOUR BASIC RIGHTS

Police atrocity against minorities is not a new thing in this country. **Chanakya** briefs you about your rights which could protect you from harassment under such situations

India is a free country. But when faced with police atrocities, many of her denizens feel they are in a vicious trap. Most of time it arises because of lack of awareness of few basic rights/processes as envisioned in the constitution of India. So we try to address few such questions:

- 1) When does the police have the right to arrest a person?
- 2) What can be done in the event of an inevitable and unlawful detainment?

Let us now discuss the following and become cognizant:

⚡ A must know fact: If you have told anything to any police personnel, it can never be used as evidence to corroborate a case against you. Many a times you must have heard a confession statement in police custody is not taken as evidence in a court of law.

⚡ Police force has social responsibility. It is always accountable and cannot use any forceful or third degree torture method without reason.

⚡ In the event of a likely arrest, **don't hesitate to contact a lawyer** or a trusted person who can bring a lawyer for you. The person on whom you would be so strongly relying should be reachable round the clock for any exigencies.

⚡ If you have a premonition of an imminent arrest related to a likely criminal case, file for what in legal terms is called as **anticipatory bail** plea at the earliest.

⚡ In case of an unavoidable arrest, **don't obstruct the legal process**. It is better to apply for a bail after the arrest instead of causing any hindrance.

⚡ Without hesitation inform the police that

you have a basic right to defend and express yourselves when there is a breach of your individual rights.

⚡ You have the right to know the reasons or grounds of an arrest. So don't hesitate to inquire about it from the police.

⚡ Your right also entitles the police to let you know your whereabouts and reason for arrest to any one of your acquaintances

⚡ You can hire any lawyer of your choice to defend yourself.

⚡ In case you are unable to find a suitable lawyer, **you have a right to ask the designated court to appoint one of such lawyers for you.** It is termed as lawyer appointed by the state.

⚡ Police cannot detain a person unless directed by a suitable authority with a valid reason. But they do have the right to use force in case they are faced with obstruction or hindrance.

⚡ A person has to be produced before the concerned magistrate within 24 hours of his arrest. In case this procedure is not completed, he has the right to ask for it.

The BEAR Culture

The bear phenomenon is a healthy addition to the gay community, writes **Dr. Uttam Dave**



The bear movement began in the mid 1980s as a rebellion against the dominant gay culture which idolised chiseled gym body as the standard of gay male beauty. If you didn't have your private parts shaved, had hair on your chest, back or legs, you would be someone who did not care about their appearance. Bears are different. They like to be hairy everywhere. They don't use colognes. While India does not have a bear culture, New York City and San Francisco do.

Bears can be identified with three of their characteristics

1. Facial Hair
2. Body Hair
3. Heavy or Husky build.

Younger or less husky, less hairy gay men who are often sexually submissive to other bears are called cubs. Many bears wear a lot of leather.

So what am I trying to convey through this small article? Be what you are. You don't have to fit into any category out of compulsion or gay peer pressure. Chiseled body or not, does it make you any less of a human being? The only difference is you will be attending different clubs if you are a bear or a cub. Bears have the reputation to be

social and friendly. The bear phenomenon is a healthy addition to the gay community.

Bear culture simply allows some isolated and underappreciated gay men to relate to other gays with whom they feel most comfortable.



*O Paji!
Kaise Ho?*



Travails of a 23 year old gay Surd, by **Manpreet Singh**

"Hello paji, kaise ho?"

So there I was, doing my usual stuff on a Friday night-which is browsing profiles of hot guys on our favorite blue dating site (Yes! I am hopeful and naïve)-when the harp shook me with the above message. It is with this epic facepalm moment that my laptop and I welcome you to the life of a 23 years old gay Surd. Through this particular piece (read banal ranting), I will try to delineate some really interesting people (read douche bags) that I

come across every other day on the popular gay dating site, Planet Romeo. Yes, they have all been categorized vis-à-vis my gay Surd existence.

The list is non-exhaustive as there is no end to the people (read douche bags) I meet. They elicit the strangest possible reactions from me with their uncanny antics. More often than not, an indomitable craving for punching them wins hands down.

So without any further ado, here's the list:

The Kind Ones

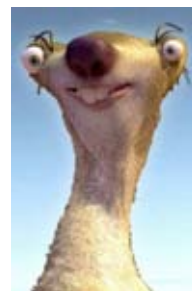
Don't be fooled by the name. This lot sends messages in the line of "*Oh, I don't do surds, but I might make an exception*"; "*Oh, I don't like hairy guys, but I am horny tonight*"; "*I generally don't like surds, but you are cute*". Like seriously? This particular breed of guys leaves one in a very conflicted state of mind. I am often confused as to how to respond! You say you find me cute but then you don't "generally" like people from my community. Boy you need to lose the fanaticism and go to a shrink!

The Insatiabables

Before I start, let me say that I have a lot of respect for effeminate guys. Hell yeah, a lot of my close friends are effeminate. But the type I am referring to here really gets the better of me sometimes. So, there I am, doing my thing (browsing) when I get messaged with a list of all the "stuff" my virtual Romeo wants me to do to him. You'd think I would be happy but hello, I might want to sail the other boat as well! Watch POGO, if you don't get it. Oh but no! This blighter won't rest till he establishes my inherent "top"ness on the basis of my Surd-ness. Oh yes, the list of "suggested fun" keeps coming. Insatiable much?

The Disbelievers

This is the kind that leaves me completely baffled. So basically these particular people go into some kind of shock if they see a perfectly normal Surd guy on a gay networking site. I have actually received messages that read "Yar, sardar bhi gay hote hain?" which translated means, "Man, even Sikh men can be gay?" Sorry to burst your bubble honey, I am Sikh, I am gay and I kind of exist. Down with the stereotypes that stop people from hitting on me in the metro!



The Heart Breakers



I remember coming across the profile of the perfectly cute guy. The universe seemed to go all rainbow and chocolates for a few minutes. But then suddenly he said,

"Dude, you are a surd!"

"Umm yeah, that's why I am wearing a bandanna or a turban in every other picture."

"You are cute, but I can't date a surd."

So, you are left heart-broken, sad, irritated (read feeling like punching the guy so hard in the junk that he never gets it up again). To be honest, this particular breed makes the "the kind ones" seem like innocent Labradors.

The Brotherhood

They are an interesting bunch of people. These people belong to the same community as I do. They, however, are blunt. In other words, the fact that they, just like me, are Surds **should be** reason enough for me to have the hots for them. Wake up call. This dude aint up for no brotherhood. From saying that they **only** make out with surds to somehow connecting the story back to Punjab, they will try everything to get inside your pants. It's INSANE!



The Collectors

So, one fine day when you are doing the regular stuff again (read browsing and ogling the same old blue site), you receive a message: "Dude, I have never done a Surd, can you help me out?" My lower jaw almost drops to the ground. But before I can recover, I am offered an explanation. Apparently, this particular guy has made out with people from different places and communities. And somehow, I am being invited to be a part of "the collection". Well, should I be proud. Confused.

Oops! List over... Time for workout!

Discriminating Daily of Amravati

-Raahul Chiranjit Sen

Amravati based newspaper 'Lokmat Amravati' launched a diatribe against Queer rights. The Marathi daily managed to put up front page news on "Samlingi Purush Sambandhacha Amravatith Deshpatlivaril Adda" (Amravati Becoming a National Level Den for Homosexual Activities) on 11th August 2013. The reporter and his team ran a 'witch-hunt' operation to dig out the common joints of the district where gay people meet. The selected correspondents and the high ups of the publication seemed oblivious of the ruling on section 377 by Delhi High Court.

The "sting operation" carried out by Ganesh Deshmukh, a correspondent of the Marathi daily claims to have tracked down homosexual cliques and their activities in the district of Amravati, Maharashtra. The inherent homosexuality associated with the story helped to sensationalize itself at the cost of leaving out myriad lurid and unacceptable (heterosexual) deviances in public transports from the attention of the media. Earlier, the aforementioned daily had been on a vocal crusade against the LGBT community. The report further describes gay men as "addicts of this kind of sex". Calling it "erosion by western culture of men trying to fulfil their unnatural desires", the report says that nearly "4000 men have fallen prey to this gay

culture".

The lack of research and sagacity is pretty evident in the report mentioned above. Moreover, NGOs like Samparan Trust and Humsafar Trust are constantly endorsing queer issues with proper education on lifestyle as well as on the sexual aspects. Unlike national newspapers, local dailies reach the households and cater to the

informational needs of the society. Except for the dissemination of unflinching homophobia, Lokmat Amravati has practically served no other purpose of publication. It is obvious that the author of the nefariously misleading article has never been able to imagine himself in a pair of queer shoes. Journalism has been founded on its singular ethical ground(s). Lokmat Amravati has seemingly taken a detour from that oft-trudged path. Besides the palpable hatred of the columnist, the report also

reeks of redundant fabrications. The choice of words and the tone of the article are tell-tale signs of its author's callousness.

A message on a social networking site or an article in a particular forum would do little to set a typically conformist society ablaze. It is the job of a million voices to cry down establishments and set the wrong right.



A Man's World



In a world dominated by men, lesbian and bisexual women find it even more difficult to express themselves, writes **Bharathi**

"You let yourself go when you can't be with the person you love, settling for someone who you know is wrong for you. You make sure that you will never be happy by choosing someone who will hurt you. While there's much masochism in having to settle for a person one is certainly not in love with, one has to think whether the frustration deep down is worth it." This is what someone had to say about her marriage to a straight man. The gay world comes with its own share of difficulties. It is, however, even harder for lesbian women.

Let's face it - it is a man's world.

A lot of lesbian women don't have the courage or the luxury to fight. They have to succumb to societal pressures and marry a man. A study conducted by The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (CDC) is of the opinion that bisexual women are twice as likely to be victims of domestic violence as straight

women.

We as a society should take a moment's pause and think over the whole idea behind traditional marriage. Denying someone the chance to be happy by forcing them to settle, giving women away to the hands of brutish men for corrective rapes is not what marriage is all about. It is as unreasonable to expect a confirmed misogynist to understand the complexities of a marriage and a woman's role in it as it is to expect acceptance for homosexuality from the society at large.

While watching two women make out can arouse a straight man, a woman finally mustering the courage to come out of the closet somehow renders the husband as cuckolded as to justify his reasons for abusing the wife he didn't know was bisexual.

When will this stop?

Just Let Us Be!

The bias against queer community in the media and police was glaringly visible during the recent raid on a Pub in Hyderabad, writes **Chanakya**

The greatest social evil of all time is prejudice. I can completely relate to this because my very existence and lifestyle is threatened by a few prejudices people have. The queer community time and again has strived to assert its basic human rights in India, but alas! We seem to be falling into an abyssal pit with no end in sight.

The recent raid on a pub in Hyderabad is just another shameful incident which has gained prominence due to its magnitude, over minor breaches of human rights we go through each day.

Should I be blaming the police, the media, or the society as a whole for this inhuman intolerance? Well.. I do not know. Maybe the police were well within their rights to raid the place as it did not have a license. Did they, however, have the right to condemn the entire crowd due to their personal homophobia? Isn't the police custodian of Indian laws? If people with such authority and responsibility are insensitive to a cause as basic as human rights, what else should we expect?

The queer community is vulnerable, but then again, may be the police authorities didn't know that. Can ignorance be an excuse?

Secondly, the media. Thanks to the media, queer community of Hyderabad is now a wild, sexually perverted, desperate bunch of people who try to propagate their "disease" to others! Welcome to the dark age of the 21st century!

Is there no amount of social responsibility of the media which could have restrained it from degrading to such an extent for TRP? Five more pubs were raided that night. Which ones? Well, you wouldn't know because all eyes were on the community- on how these groups of deviants are shameful to society and Indian culture.

My only humble question- 'Do only members of the community party, booze and hook up? Do people in straight pubs come together to conduct prayer meetings or solemnize ceremonies?' Do not attribute immorality to a community. We are also part of this modernized and globalised society and are in sync with the trends of the time. If partying is wrong, ban it as a whole. But if you try to tell me that queer parties are bad, your bias is just absurd!

I do not wish to ask for support as I am tired of defeat. Have tolerance! You don't even have to care, but just let us be!

Here's To The Ladies In Drag!

- KlosetQ

Drag queens have now slowly begun to make their mark in the spotlight, all because of RuPaul. RuPaul, the most famous Drag queen ever, has now made a trademark in the gay scene and is considered the epitome of Drag realness. What started off as a go-go dancer in the underground gay clubs has now made her an ever popular emcee, actress, singer-songwriter, model and a reality TV host.

Her one of a kind Drag race series, "RuPaul's Drag Race" is considered a sophomore entry to launch Drag Queens in the mainstream. Such is her credit, that she has been

successful in producing 61 Drag Queens in the U.S as well as the world over in a span of six seasons including an All Stars season. Her series deals with Drag Queens vying for custom made supply of MAC Cosmetics and a whopping cash prize of \$ 100,000. Queens have to face a main challenge every week wherein they are judged, based on their credibility in portraying themselves as versatile, beautiful, charismatic and ever shockingly adept at lip synching for saving oneself from elimination. This is one such series wherein the contestants have to sew, design, model and perform in their main challenges all at the same time - bringing any



Ivy Winters and Jinkx Monsoon

Tyra Banks' model to shame. Ranging from pageantry, campy to comedy - you have it all. The drama is so sickening it has taken the primetime slot in LogoTV for its usual airings not to mention a behind-the-scenes of the contestants when they un-tuck.

Watching RuPaul's Drag Race has only made me realize that perhaps, us (the brown folk), ignore and consider the gender labelling as queer as sheer mockery. Gay men displaying flamboyance is shunned and considered a disgrace to manhood. Expressive men with gender bender mannerisms are derided and bullied. They consider being in drag, a form of art, an ability to become a painted canvas ready to explore and channel some fishiness. Their thick white makeup, outrageous handmade costumes are perhaps an example of their anxieties, moral in acceptance and gothic transcendental beauty. Trying to cover their social apprehensions with sky high heels, five inches long hair wigs and faux breastplates - they have made their hooker chic wicked avatar a downright damnation to your orthodoxy.

They strongly dislodge themselves from society belonging to cross dressers. Cross dressers are just men donning the female physical appearance just trying to blend in the normalcy. However, drag queens deliberately paint themselves to leave a mark through their stage shows, singles, and performances, or solely by their personas. They offer a panoramic view of their internal caricature to portray a character they have been trying to relate with from so long.

They do not associate themselves with females. They are not confused. They are just

**They do not
associate
themselves with
females. They are
not confused. They
are just women
with penises**

women with penises. Unafraid of any moral insult, they are here to exactly do what we expect - laugh at themselves. From the social policing to the breaking news on primetime, they are here to carve a niche for themselves. By constantly reinventing their looks, they no

longer seem the typical high fashioned damsels in distress. By their unique talent and passion to call a spade a spade they are here to remind the society of the blasphemous laws and corruption occurring in the very minds of our own. A vintage example of weirdness - they are alive and yet forever dead. Their

dream of being extreme, famous and desire to take a place no one ever could is the reason behind their ignorance to the flak they have to tender every single day. From being a pale white ghost to a woman of everyone's seduction - she prances effortlessly in shapes and sizes armed with her ample truck loads of brushes, paint, wigs, dicks and glossy born to kill high shoes.

Such is the open exhibitionism of distaste; effeminate men tend to be more suppressed and closeted. An era where the world knows only rainbows and freedom has now being reduced to a Diaspora of shame and unofficial forbiddance. Do the tall claims of Article 377 imperialism hold any justice and change to the minds of ever rigid sodomized India? Today, the third gender, males having sex with males, undeclared sexual males or transgenders have all ruthlessly been prohibited in one category - uncouth. Does resorting to alms on the inhumane traffic lights and offering one's anus solve this problem? The answer has always been realized yet ignored. Merely, staging protests does little help to the rising tide of confusion and ostracism.



Ajeeb Dastaan Hai Yeh

Kumam Davidson reviews the short film *Ajeeb Dastaan Hai Yeh* in Bombay Talkies

People have always resented Karan Johar's stereotypical portrayal of homosexuality in his films. From *Kal Ho Na Ho* to *Student of the Year*, homosexuality has been used to induce laughter in K. Jo's movies, leading to ridicule and mockery. It is true that some gays are effeminate but portraying effeminacy as the only trait of gays in a work of art that goes across multiplexes and cities is problematic and misleading. This has been Johar's problem while dealing with homosexuality. However, "Ajeeb Dastaan Hai Yeh" in *Bombay Talkies* has come out as a matured text on homosexuality.

This is a short film about how people cope with homosexuality; those who are themselves homosexual and those related to

them. It is also about a generational gap between a gay man who is young and open and a middle-aged married man who is closeted. The film shows how their families negotiate with their homosexuality. It is set in contemporary Mumbai, but it can be any other urban space.

Avinash (Saqib Saleem) screams at his father that he is gay and walks out of his family. He throws one of the most pertinent questions to the educated class of his father's generation: If educated, why can you not understand homosexuality? This question is not just for Avinash's father, but to the fathers and mothers of this nation across class. And perhaps this is the most important question today.



Dev (Randeep Hooda) cannot accept homosexuality because he thinks it compromises one's manhood, family and social values. This is a typical mindset which has its roots in heterosexuality where notions of masculinity and femininity are strict. And this is what the film is trying to convey to the audience, the society. We live with some fundamental ideological flaws and the flaws need to be understood.

Gayatri (Rani Mukherjee) is smart and successful at work. But she is unhappy and quite frustrated with her married life. Like a typical wife she assumes that a lack in her turns the married life cold. She gives up all these unnecessary blames at the end and

goes on to start anew in life. Everything takes a new turn when Avinash comes to their lives, intrudes their personal relationship and spaces.

The film is a lot about breaking stereotypes, social norms, gender roles, and of course about taking forward the discussion on homosexuality to a different level. Avinash steals the show with his bold and rebellious acts. In one scene Avinash goes on to hug and kiss Dev in the neck in front of people in the office. This is crucial. It is about questioning the assumption that it is not pleasant or unacceptable for two men to perform such an act in public. It is about claiming legitimacy of being gay and to be cool about it in public. The strict structure of heterosexuality is already dismantled.

In short, the film scores high in terms of political radicalism of homosexuality. The length definitely limits the potential of the film. It can do much better in a full-fledged film. Nonetheless, a mainstream cinema has portrayed two men kissing onscreen to the discomfort of many audience. They are not even *stereotypically effeminate*. It is a good treat that comes as a part of celebrating hundred years of Indian Cinema.



REVIEW: EP Fall Apart

Kumam Davidson reviews the debut music album of Kenyth Mogan



Kenyth Mogan, a gay icon himself and now a rising music artist, released his debut album EP *Fall Apart* recently. This new music artist is superbly talented. He has got a great voice and great potential for lyrics. With one of the best fresh voices around, sensational lyrics and good music; his EP is impressive. Two cool cover songs and three amazing originals; the album is too impressive for a debut. Kenyth definitely has a long way to go!



Mickey: Originally recorded by Tony Basil in 1981; it's an amusing song and it's even more fun now. This cover song suits his voice perfectly. Tony's original is superb, but Kenyth's rendition is also terrific in its own way. Perfect for the dance floor.

Fall Apart: The most amazing of all for many. The song is very catchy, fast and yet very emotional. It is everyone's favorite now. The video is also out for this one and it is just incredible. Partly based on Kenyth's own breakup with his former boyfriend, the video stars Kenyth and Tyler Schuelke (plays his boyfriend). This song really shows Kenyth's flair for lyrics, obviously a great voice and he is a good actor too. He is lovely on screen.

Let Me Unlock Your Heart: This is one of those emotional but very cool numbers as well. Apart from the fine lyrics the music scores very high for this one. The beats are well done. Good one for remix already!

I like 'Em Big and Stupid: The second cover and originally recorded by Julie Brown in 1987. It's a very fun song with fast beats. His voice really works for this. One would not really say the original is better. So cheers to Kenyth for singing a cover song too well.

One Worth Losing: This one is just so lovely. Such beautiful tunes, breathtaking lyrics and tremendous energy. The beat is right and the pitch perfect. It is quite a different one from the rest. May be Huffpost is right to call it the "strongest ballad". Definitely, a very powerful one. And one keeps asking for more from Kenyth after this.

Book Review:

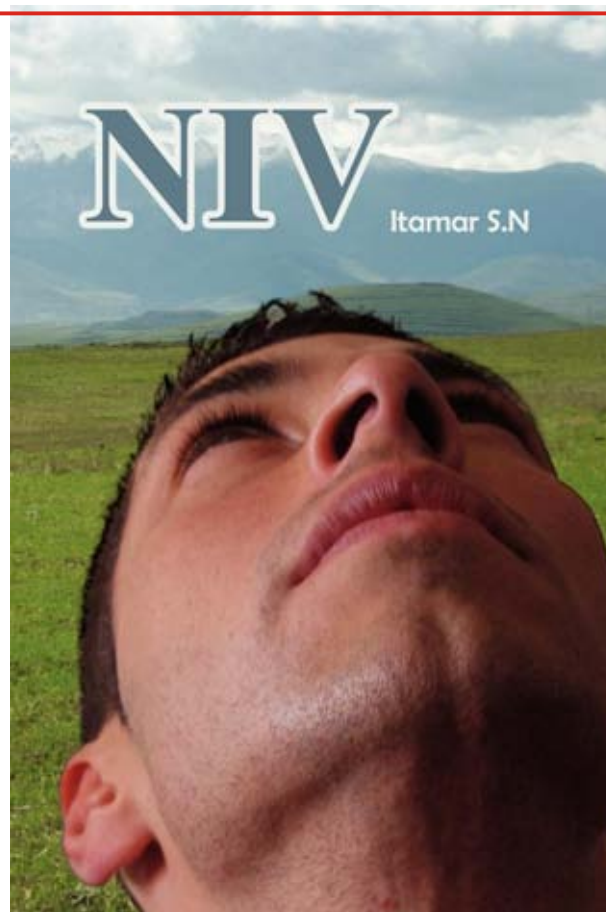
-Sukhdeep Singh

Around April, I received a message from a young Israeli writer by the name of Itamar S.N. to review his recently published book NIV. What caught my attention was that the book was set in Israel and not only tried to capture the complexities of a gay relationship, but also reflected upon the difficulties and opposition that two lovers in a straight relationship face too.

There are two parallel stories running in the book. One, set in 2011 in Israel, is the story of Erez, a young artist and bar tender who falls in love with a man he meets at the bar he works; and the other story, set in 1914 around the time of World War I near the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, is the story of two young lovers Katya and Anush, one a Christian and another a Muslim.

Erez cannot resist the charm of Niv, who is a wealthy man, a connoisseur of art and also organises art exhibitions of his own. He recognizes the talent of Erez, but his interest extends beyond Erez's paintings. Niv though is not all that uncomplicated. Brought up by conservative parents, he has always done what others expected out of him. This is the first time he was falling for a guy and letting himself be. But soon, Niv's attempt at hiding their relationship begins to irk Erez.

Anush on the other hand is a simple muslim shepherd, whose daily routine involves taking the herd of sheep to the top of the mountain, where he sits all day long and plays his Duduk. He has an unexpected audience of a beautiful young girl named Katya one day, whose smile and face wouldn't leave his thoughts. Love between them sprouts soon. But with the world engaged in a brutal war, the situations are not in favour of two young lovers, especially when they belong two different religions. With the war spreading across Europe, Katya has two options- either she marries Anush and stays back, or move with her family to safer place.



The orthodox Muslim father of Anush will not accept a daughter-in-law of different faith. He decides to move with Katya, but finally cannot abandon his own family.

The author connects these two stories through the concept of incarnation. It is a love that bypasses time. Will the unfulfilled love of Anush and Katya finally be able to unite in the form of Erez and Niv? NIV also gives you a glimpse into the night life of Tel-Aviv- the parties and bars that the city is famous for; though it steers clear of the political turmoil that the country is embroiled in. But it is not the story of Erez and Niv that finally stays with you. It is the story of Anush and Katya that lingers on in your mind. The emotions and excitement of falling in love for the first time, unaware of the many challenges lying ahead, of the sexual tidings that goes inside two young bodies get beautifully portrayed in that story.

As his first book, NIV is a good start by Itamar that takes you through the complexities of love and reminds you no matter straight or gay, the path of love is never devoid of social challenges.

POEMS

You Said NO

- Aijaz Ahmad

There was nothing before...
Nothing
Not even any shadow of your presence

Then I imagined you
In the dark moments of my loneliness and
solitude

A silhouetted figure came into existence
I crafted you in my dreams every night
I chiseled you piece by piece
Like a mad sculptor
Carried you inside me
Like a mother carries child inside her womb
And finally I gave birth to you into my reality

Then I taught you everything
My words
My poems
My passions

You moved like reality

And finally when you were complete
I asked you,

"Do you love me?"

You coldly said something I never taught you

You said,

"No"

Since then, my love
The one who created you
Ceased to exist for you
Ever

Hopeful Lies

-Davneet Narang

Since a long & unknown time
My mind had been a noise
I thought it was no crime
To give it a little voice

I told them I was queer
Doc said I was deranged
It's just a learnt behaviour
And it's possible to be changed

They agreed with what Doc said
Their tears, unshed, I'd seen
I cleaned my past, silenced my mind
And gave up what I'd been

I told my mind - the phase is gone
I'll be normal and straight
And yes, a new person was born
And mind bowed to its fate

Doc gave me male-injections
I gymmed and worked and prayed
We had the counselling sessions
But mind felt bit betrayed

I got myself a girlfriend
But love just caused a fear
I hate to speak, I hate to smile
Mind whispers in my ear

Again I tell me hopeful lies
It feels like bitter liquor
I pray and work and close my eyes
But I can't feel any better

Doc says - believe that all is fine
And Truth will hide away
The bitter liquor's a tasteful wine
Let Hope now lead the way

So I numb my brain and drink this wine
And take the blue coloured pill
The mind's a noise, I let it whine
And soon, quiet down, it will



LIVE TO
SEE YOUR LOVE
KILL GAY BULLYING NOT YOURSELF

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR LGBT

WEST BENGAL

THE PRATYAY GENDER TRUST

Contact person : Anindya Hajra
Address : 293 Jodhpur Park ,
 Calcutta, Pin 700 068
Phone : 033 2464 1893

E-mail :
pratyaygendertrust@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : Hijras,
 MSM (particularly kotis)

DURBAR MAHILA SAMANWAYA COMMITTEE

Contact person : Mrinal Kanti Dutta

Address : 12/5 Nilmoni Mitra Street, Kolkata West Bengal, India
Phone : 033 2543 7451 / 7560, +91-33 2530 3148

Email: dmsc@durbar.org

Website:

<http://www.durbar.org/>

Target populations : Female, Male and Transgender sex workers

SAATHII CALCUTTA

Contact person : Pawan Dhall, Chief Coordinator

Address : 229 Kalitala Main Road, Purbanchal (N), Kolkata Pin 700 064

Phone : 033 2484-4835

E-mail : saathii@yahoo.com / pawan30@yahoo.com

Website : www.saathii.org

Target populations : MSM in general, male sex workers, transgender people, bisexuals

Sappho

Contact person : Malavika
Address : 11A Jogendra Gardens(South),Ground Floor, Kolkata, Pin 700 078
Phone : 033 2441 9995

Email: malvi99@hotmail.com , sappho1999@rediffmail.com

Website:

<http://sapphokolkata.org/>

Target Population : Lesbians and bisexual women

Prantik Bongaon

Contact person : Niloy Basu
Address : C/o Niloy Basu, Peada Para, P.O. Bongaon, Pin 743 235
Phone : 91 3251 257 029, 9332254855

E-mail : ajnil@rediffmail.com / ajnil123@rediffmail.com

Target populations : Hijras, Kothis, MSM in general

Northern Black Rose

Contact person : Souvik Ghosal
Address : C/o Hori Roy, M. B. Mukherjee Nursing Home, Hill Cart Road, Rajani Bagan, Khudiram Palli, Silliguri 734 401
Phone : 91-9433009116

E-mail: northernblack_rose@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : Hijras, Meitis, other sexual minorities,
Astitva Dakshin

Contact person : Debasish Mitra
Address : C/o Bablu Bajkar, Baruiapur Ukilpara, Kolkata 700144
Phone : 91-9836185589, 9830837440

E-mail : astitvadakshin@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : Hijras, Kothis

Madhya Banglar Sangram

Contact person : Arunava Nath
Address : Kazi Ali Aftab Vill. Goaljan, P.O. Radharghat, P.S. Berhampore
Phone: 91 9932760967, 9232694700

E-mail: sangram_06@hotmail.com

SWIKRITI

Contact person : Rajarshi Chakraborty, Secretary

Address : 42/57 DumDum Road, Kolkata 700074

Phone : +91 9831743608, 9433009190

E-mail: swikriti2003@hotmail.com

Target populations : Bisexual women, lesbians, MSM in general, transgender people
PEOPLE LIKE US (PLUS)

Contact person : Agniva Lahiri
Address : 254, Bonomali Bannerjee Road, Kolkata - 700082, West Bengal, India
Phone : 033 2402 9305

E-mail : pluskolkata@gmail.com

Target populations : Support group for young gender variants

SWAPNIL

Contact person : SUMAN RUDRA

Address : Kotalhat Dist-Burdwan, P.O. Burdwan, Pin 751015, West Bengal

Phone : 09932241372

E-mail : swapnil_burdwan@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : MSM & TG Groups

MAHARASHTRA

Samapathik Trust, Pune

Contact person : Bindumadhav Khire

Address : Samapathik Trust, 1004 Budhwar Peth, Office No. 9, 3rd Floor, Building Name: Rameshwar Market, Pune

Phone : (020) 6417 9112

E-mail : samapathik@hotmail.com



Send us your feedback, suggestions, articles and coming out experiences to:
editor@gaylaxymag.com

